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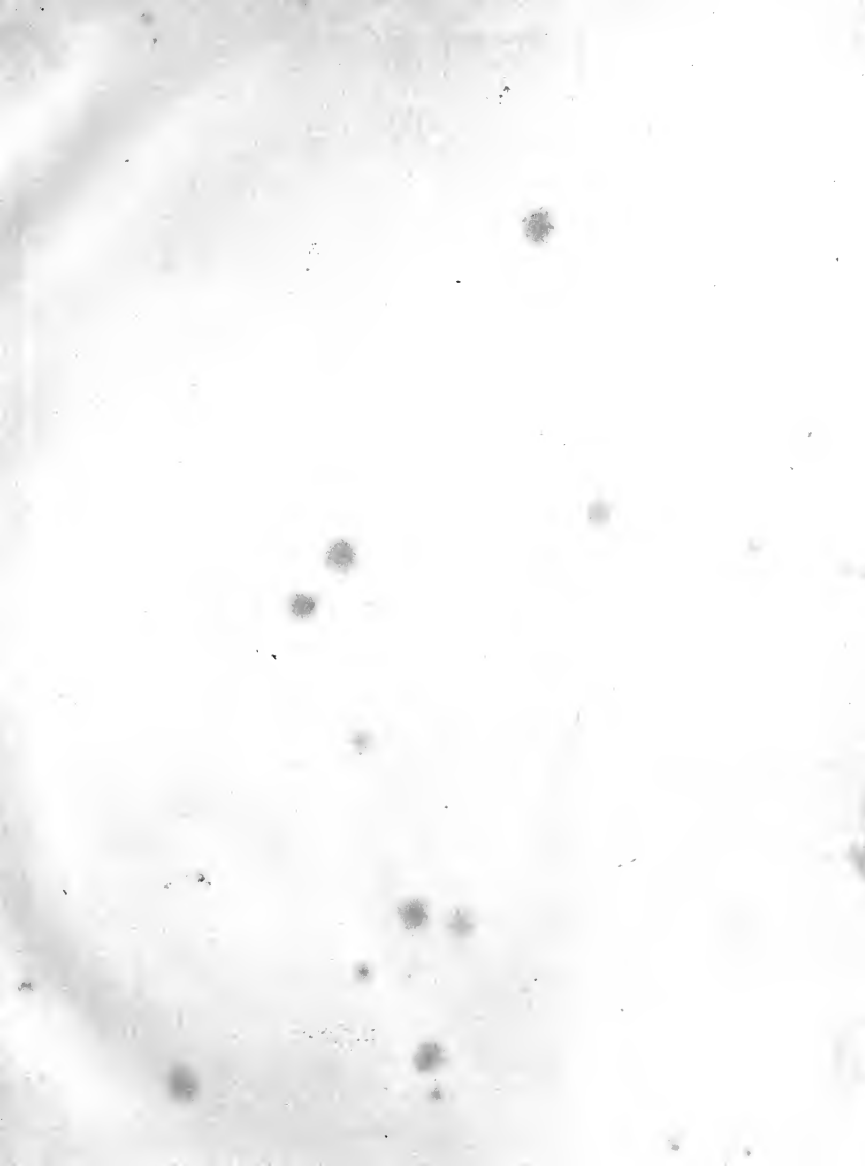




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THE HOLIDAY.

# HOME AND ITS PLEASURES:

*Simple*

STORIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

BY

MRS. HARRIET MYRTLE.

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WITH EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS BY HABLOT K. BROWNE.



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## THE HOLIDAY.

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THE little girls who attended Mrs. Page's school in the village had just been dismissed with the agreeable promise that, in consequence of their good behaviour and progress during the last two months, "this day week should be a holiday." They dispersed in different directions homeward in high spirits at the thought, and full of plans as to the pleasantest way of spending it.

There was one among them, a girl of about twelve, who, as she went on, was surrounded by a knot of the youngest children in the school; one clung to her frock, two had hold of her hands, and three or four capered round and round her, all asking questions at once.

"What shall you do Emmy Forester? Will your grand-

papa take you out anywhere ?” “ Should you like best to go out or stay and play at home ?” “ Do you think I had better finish dressing the doll you gave me ?” “ Don’t you think I had better dig up my garden again ? you know you said it was not pretty.”

Emmy answered these questions very satisfactorily as it seemed, for they all parted from her with smiles and kisses, and she rung at the gate of her own home as full of smiles as any of them. She knew very well how she should spend the holiday. Her grandpapa had promised her that on the first opportunity he would take her to London. It took only two hours to go there by the train, but she had never been there yet. She had lived always, as long as she could remember anything, alone with her kind old grandpapa in this quiet village, for she had no papa nor mama, nor brothers nor sisters. But Emmy had some cousins who lived in London, and they had told her when they came to see her about many of the wonderful sights there, about the many hundreds and thousands of houses, the crowds of people, the carriages and omnibuses and horses, the river Thames, the bridges, the steamboats, St. Paul’s with its great dome, the Tower, and above all the Zoological Gardens. The idea that she should see all these things, in-

cluding the real living lions and tigers, and all the animals and birds and serpents, was delightful. She looked so joyous when Mary the maid opened the gate, that she exclaimed "Why, Miss Emmy, what has happened?"

The good news was quickly told to Mary, and very soon Emmy and her grandpapa were seated at tea talking over this excursion to London, and considering how to manage to see as much as possible in one day without spending more money than they could afford. They talked of nothing else till bed-time; Emmy could not go to sleep for thinking, and when she did, she dreamed that she was on the river Thames, which looked like silver, and there was an elephant walking on the bank among tall trees, and she wondered where all the houses and people were. When she awoke in the morning she said to herself, "only six days more." She was obliged to try very much to attend to her lessons at school that day; but try as she would, she could not help thinking of London, till at last Mrs. Page said very gravely, "Miss Forester, what can you be thinking of?" So then she was very sorry and really did attend.

As the time drew nearer she longed more and more for the happy day. They were to start at seven in the morning so as to have plenty of time. Mary washed and ironed her

best frock and trimmed her bonnet with new ribbons; every thing was ready; her grandpapa seemed as pleased as she was herself; and now the last day of the week had come, and to-morrow was the holiday. Emmy danced up the garden walk when she came home in the evening, sung all the time she was getting ready to go down to tea; then peeped into the drawer where her frock was, then looked out at the window once more to see if the setting sun was red or golden, and to guess from these signs if the weather would be fine; then she ran merrily down stairs and found her grandpapa in his arm chair waiting for her with his kind smile.

A letter lay on the table directed to her. She saw it was from her dear nurse Susan, who had taken care of her like a mother when she was a baby and had only left her rather more than two years ago, to be married to a gardener who lived in the old town of Winchester. Emmy loved her very much, and never forgot her, and now she opened the letter eagerly.

“My dear Young Lady,” it began, “I am in great sorrow, and I would not write to you to make your heart sad about me if I did not know that you would be grieved

if trouble had come upon me and I had never told you, so as to give you time to help me, if help can come to me, and yet I hardly think any can. My dear young lady, my husband has had the misfortune to have a leg and an arm broken by a carriage running over him as he was turning the corner of a street with his tools over his shoulder. He was carried home to me in this state a month ago and he still lies helpless. I know he frets not to be able to work for us, and this hinders him from getting well. He does not complain, but is very patient, and yet he suffers terribly. My sister Jane came home to us the day before our misfortune, so ill she could not stay in her place. It was too hard for her, and she had got a bad cough there, and I have a great fear she will go into a decline. But what is my greatest grief of all is about my pretty baby; for my husband, please God, will recover—oh, yes! I pray God, he will recover, and then these hard times will be over with us, and my sister may get better if you will do me the kindness I am going to ask of you; but my poor little boy is pining away and I cannot see how to save him.

“But for my sister Jane, if you, my dear young lady, will ask your grandpapa, who is always so kind to everybody, if he will lend us half-a-sovereign, she could go home

to mother, and I think it would do her good, and we would gratefully repay him when John can go to work again. I feel sometimes as if my heart would break, and I do long to see your dear face again, at times, very sorely.

“Your loving humble Servant,

“SUSAN TURNER.”

The tears had gathered in Emmy's eyes as she read this sad letter.

“Look, grandpapa !” she cried as she handed it to him, “poor Susan, dear Susan ! and the pretty little baby that she wrote to me about so happily in the spring,” and, as her grandpapa read, she leaned over his shoulder and her tears fell on the paper.

“Poor Susan !” he said with a sigh, “I will certainly lend her the ten shillings. I am very sorry for her.”

Emmy continued to lean on the back of his chair with her face buried in her hands. She thought of the pretty baby and fancied that perhaps he might die even to-morrow while she was amusing herself, and that the poor sick man would be so miserable that he would die to. Then she felt as if she could not enjoy anything to-morrow. Then the last words of the letter came into her mind “I do long



to see your dear face, at times, very sorely." She wished she could go to Susan, but she said to herself it was "impossible"; and yet while she said so, a way to do it came back again and again to her mind. She could not bear to think of it, but still it came again. At last she started up and took hold of her grandpapa's hand, saying as she looked in his face,

"Is it farther to Winchester than to London, grandpapa? Would it cost you more to take me there."

"No, my child," he replied, "it is not as far nor as expensive."

"Then let us go there to-morrow instead of to London," she said quickly, but as she said so she threw her arms round his neck and cried bitterly.

"Bless you my child for this wish," he said, "I will gladly take you to see Susan, and I hope we may be permitted to give her help and comfort."

When Emmy lay down to sleep that night her heart was glad though all her bright hopes for the morrow were gone, and though she often had to wipe the tears from her cheeks.

It was a lovely morning, and when Emmy had set out with her grandpapa, she did not feel unhappy any more. She thought of nothing but the pleasure of seeing her dear

nurse again, and trying to comfort her, and then she felt as if her grandpapa would be sure to make them all well. He could always help everybody, and he was once a doctor, and knew so well how to manage everything. Oh, she was sure that they should be able to comfort Susan !

But when at last they found the little street in which Susan lived, and when they tapped at the door, and a voice that sounded very sad said "Come in," she felt afraid to look round her, so her grandpapa went first and led her in, and she saw Susan looking so ill, so changed, she hardly knew her again ; and there was poor John in a little bed by the wall, and there was a pale girl sitting near the window at work, and the little, thin, wasted baby lay in his mother's lap. The room had hardly any furniture, and felt close and hot. Emmy could only throw her arms round Susan's neck and sob and kiss her.

But soon she heard Susan's words of surprise and delight at seeing her, and then she heard her grandpapa talking cheerfully to them all, and it seemed as if every thing grew brighter. She looked up.

"Oh yes, let me look at your dear face again," Susan cried, "how well you look, how you are grown ! Oh, how good of you to come to see me ; but I might have known

you would with your kind heart that always felt for everybody's sorrows."

Very soon Emmy had made acquaintance with the little boy. He smiled at her, and at last let her take him on her lap, and her grandpapa looked at him, and asked questions about him, and then told Susan not to be so fearful about him for he only wanted change of air and nourishing food. Emmy looked at him as he said so, and whispered something to him. Then he smiled and said, that if Susan would part with him for a time, his little Emmy would be his nurse and make him well for her, and that if Jane would come home with them, she could help, and she would get well too very soon in the pure country air ; and then he told John he must make haste and recover his strength, for he thought he knew of a good place in the village where he lived, if he and Susan did not mind leaving Winchester, and coming there as soon as he was able to move.

It took a little while to persuade Susan to do all this. She said, over and over again, that she was very grateful to Mr. Forester ; that it was very good of him ; that she did not know how to bless and thank him enough ; but she looked at her little Johnnie, and then she faltered, and

seemed not able to part with him. But the sick man raised himself on his pillow, and spoke so strongly and well, that she felt he was right. He told her Mr. Forester knew best what was good for them; that it was a blessed prospect held out to them; that their dear baby would die if he stayed here, and that he had lost his place by his long illness, and would gladly go wherever Mr. Forester wished. So Susan consented.

Now Jane began to get ready, and Susan packed up a little bundle of clothes for Johnnie, and Emmy saw her grandpapa give her some money to get all that her husband wanted, and heard him tell her to keep him very quiet and to let more air into the room, and keep him cheerful, and in three weeks he might be well enough to move. Then they set out homeward. Johnnie did not cry; he seemed to have become quite fond of Emmy already, and went fast asleep on her lap as soon as the train started.

Mary was quite surprised to see such a party come home; and soon got tea ready for them, and then Emmy went up and helped her to make a little bed for Johnnie, and to prepare a room next to her own for Jane. Mary wished to put Johnnie's bed there, but Emmy begged so hard to have it in hers, that Mary consented. Emmy reminded

her that she could call Jane if he awoke in the night, but he never did awake : he slept quite quietly. Emmy awoke at sunrise, and stole softly to him to look at him, and there he lay fast asleep, so she ventured to give him one kiss and then crept into bed again. When it was time to get up, she went to Jane and told her to lie still for she would wash and dress him. She said she had often seen the women in the village dress their children, and knew how to do it ; so as soon as he opened his eyes and held out his arms for his mother, she went to him, played with him, shewed him some pretty flowers, and gave him a ball to hold in his hands, and then she took him up, and washed him and put on his clothes, talking to him all the time, and amusing him so that he did not cry at all. Then she carried him out into the garden.

It was a warm bright morning and the birds were singing merrily. He heard them and turned up his little face to see where the sound came from. She pointed up to the trees and said, "hark !" and he pointed up too and made a sound very like "hark !" He was nearly a year and a half old, and ought to have been able to run about and talk a little by this time, only he had been ill for so long he had never learned. But Emmy soon found he understood her.

She carried him round the garden, stopping to look at all the bright flowers, and letting him smell them and touch them, and then she got a large cloak and laid it on the grass and seated him upon it, and picked some daisies and gave to him. He was so pleased with them ! He examined them, made them up into little bunches, and held them out to give to her ; then, when the birds sung he held up his hand and said, “ hark ! ” and dropped the daisies ; and then he had to collect them all again. When grandpapa came out to take his morning walk, he was quite pleased to see his little Emmy so employed, and she ran to him with a face full of happiness. He presently sent out Johnnie’s bread and milk into the garden, and when Emmy was obliged to go to breakfast that she might be in time for school, Jane came and fed him.

Emmy was obliged to say to herself, “ I *must* go to school, and I *must* attend to my lessons, and not think of Johnnie ; ” and she succeeded and Mrs. Page praised her very much that day. In the evening she was rewarded by Jane coming to meet her, drawing a little wooden carriage, that her kind grandpapa had borrowed, with the little fellow seated in it ; and he had already a little colour in his cheeks and lips. This was the way Emmy went on

for several days. Jane began to look much better, and Johnnie could crawl about the grass plot, and certainly said some words. He could say "mother" and "father;" at least he made sounds that Emmy said she was sure meant mother and father.

And now she had another employment that was very pleasant. There was a common close to the village, and at one corner of it there was a stile that led into a large field, with a cottage close to the stile by a large tree. Her grandpapa had often said he should like to rent this field, and keep a cow; and now he made up his mind he would do it; and that he would have the cottage repaired, and let John and Susan live in it; and John should be his gardener, and attend to the cow and the hay-making, and all that had to be done, and Susan could take in washing. It was a delightful plan.

Every morning and evening, now, Emmy and her grandpapa went to see how the repairs at the cottage were going on. It was soon all put to rights, painted, and white-washed. Then Mary came and scrubbed the floor, and Jane cleaned the windows, and Emmy tied up the roses on the porch, and planted some geraniums and fuchsias in the little garden in front, while Johnnie sat on the door-step,

looking at a picture-book of birds and animals. Every day he learned something new; he even began to walk; but they did not tell Susan so in any of their letters. That was to be a surprise for her. The cottage had a good-sized kitchen, in which there was a stove and an oven and boiler; a wash-house at the back, with a copper in it, and two bed-rooms up stairs. "How nice it will be," thought Emmy to herself, "to run across the common, and see dear Susan ironing at the window. I know she will have it all so clean. I wish there was a row of plates on those shelves and a gay-looking tea tray under them. Don't you think, grandpapa," she said aloud, "that it will look very comfortable when all the plates and cups and things are put on the shelves?"

Her grandpapa answered by placing a sovereign in her hand. "I have always intended, my Emmy," he said, "to give you this money. If we had gone to London we should have spent it in sight-seeing. Would you like to spend it in furnishing Susan's shelves?"

Emmy was in great joy at the thought, and went home full of importance to consult Mary and Jane what to buy. Grandpapa meant to give the beds and chairs and tables, they were not to think of those large things.



Every spare half hour was now spent in the village, choosing things that should be both cheap and pretty. At last Emmy had fixed on twelve white plates with blue edges, and two baking dishes to match; a teapot and set of tea-things; some jugs of different sizes; several bowls and basins, and some blue and white mugs, and one little one with "a present for Johnnie," on it, in gold letters. It seemed as if it had been made on purpose for him. All these useful things, together, had not cost more than five shillings. Then she took Mary to the tin shop, and they chose a kettle, two saucepans, one large the other small, a gridiron and frying-pan. These things had cost more; she had only five shillings left. She took two days considering what to do with this precious five shillings; but at last she chose a pretty tea-tray and two strong white tablecloths. All these things were put in her play-room. She set them out to admire them, and her grandpapa was called in to look at them. Now that all was ready, she longed to hear that John was well enough to come. As to little Johnnie, he was so improved that you could scarcely have known he was the same little pale boy that she brought home a few weeks since.

At last, one evening, as Emmy and her companions came

out of school, they met Mr. Forester at the gate, and found he had come to ask for a holiday for next day for them all, which Mrs. Page granted.

“How shall we spend this holiday, Emmy?” said he, as they walked away.

“I guess. John and Susan are coming to the cottage to-morrow?”

“Yes, and you must be up early to carry in all the things, and have it ready.”

Emmy was up at sunrise. The shelves were soon full; the tea tray, placed on the table underneath, leaned against the wall; the bright tin things were ranged on the mantelpiece; the table cloths, nicely hemmed by Emmy's own hands, laid in the cupboard. Meanwhile, Mary was busy at home preparing a good dinner; they were all to dine together, under the large tree in the field. A boy, called Tom Andrews, who lived near, was employed to help to carry plates, knives and forks, and all that was wanted to lay the cloth, from the house into the field, and when he had nothing else to do, he climbed the tree to amuse Johnnie. The fire was lighted in the kitchen, and the kettle filled and set by the side, but none of Susan's things were to be used, for she must see everything in its place.

Johnnie was dressed in his best new frock that Emmy had made for him, and they all sat under the tree, waiting for the travellers.

Presently, Tom, who had climbed up it, called out that he thought he saw them coming.

“Go and meet them, my darling,” said Mr. Forester, “You deserve the pleasure of placing Johnnie in his mother’s arms once more.”

Emmy took up the little boy, and walked fast towards his father and mother, who had just got over the stile. What Susan said to her when they met, no one ever knew but herself, nor what thanks and blessings John poured out; but when they came to the old tree, and Mr. Forester held out his hand to them, and they saw Jane looking nearly well again, and the pretty cottage behind, Susan sat down on the grass with her child in her arms, and tears of joy fell down her cheeks. “Oh! it is too much happiness,” she cried; “God will bless you both; I cannot speak to thank you.”

Little Johnny had been gathering all manner of bright flowers, which he held in his frock, but he let them drop, clasped his arms tightly round her neck, patted her face, kissed her, and said, “Mother, mother,” quite plainly.

Then Emmy gathered up all his flowers again, and told Susan to put him down, and let him shew them to Jane. So she put him down, and to her great surprise, he walked quite firmly to Jane, and then ran back to her. Emmy stood leaning on her grandpapa's shoulder, looking on, and John said, "he never could have believed such a thing, unless his own eyes had told him."

Presently, John and Susan had to go into their cottage, and to see and admire everything. They were more delighted even than Emmy expected, and that is saying a great deal. Susan said again and again, "it is too much happiness!" and it was only a beginning of many happy days. Emmy very often enjoyed the sight she had longed to see, of Susan ironing at the cottage window; and though she had not to nurse Johnnie any more, for he grew strong and healthy, she seldom passed a day without sitting at the door, or under the old tree, teaching him or playing with him. She had given up the pleasure of a holiday, but this happy home repaid her a hundredfold.

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THE MAIL TRAIN.

## THE MAIL TRAIN.

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“Do you think papa will come home soon, mama?”

“Will papa come to-day?”

“Will he be home before dinner?”

“When will he come mama?”

These questions were all asked at once, as nurse opened the drawing-room door, and Fred, Rose, George, and little Lucy came in and gathered round their mama. They had just returned from their walk in the garden and shrubbery.

“I hope he will come very soon, my darlings,” she answered.

“But, do you think so?”

“Yes, I do think so. But I have had a letter from somebody else that is coming to-day. Guess who is coming.”

A great many guesses were made, but all wrong, till at last Rose exclaimed, "Grandmama!"

On seeing their mama smile, as if they were right at last, the children began to make great rejoicings and to plan different games, at which grandmama would play with them, and think of the stories she would tell them. In the midst of this talk a little box was brought in, directed to "Master George Herbert." But, under the name was written, "Not to be opened till I come." It was their grandmama's writing.

What could be in this box? They looked at the top and the bottom and all the four sides. George shook it and said he heard something rattle; but Rose told him he must not do that, he might break it; so he declared he would hide it under an arm-chair and try not to think of it; and his mama, to help him in his resolution, took out a book full of pictures, and shewed them to him and Lucy. As to Fred, he brought in his horse to play with, and Rose took her doll out of the cradle and dressed her. Fred was, however, desired to go to the window very often and look whether grandmama's carriage was in sight. He rode round several times, but always cried out, "nobody coming." At last, while he and Rose were employed in



giving Lady Fanny, the doll, a ride on the horse, a sound of wheels was heard, and grandmama stopped at the door.

They all went to welcome her and bring her in, and while she was talking to their mama, and having her cloak and bonnet taken off, George crept under the chair and put the box on the table, so that as soon as she had taken her seat she saw it, took it up, and opened it. Inside, there was a railway train, nicely packed in silver paper. It had an engine, a tender, a luggage van, and a whole set of carriages; and out of the chimney of the engine there came some soft white cotton for smoke. The carriages were all lying in the box separate from one another, but each had hooks and little rings to fasten them together, and when they were all joined and set on the floor, with the engine in front, they looked very nice and pretty. George was very much pleased with them, and thanked his grandmama for her present. Then he began to pull the train up and down the room.

“Suppose, George,” said Fred, “we play at being driver and guard, and going to Southampton, and stop at the stations where they stopped when we went to the Isle of Wight.”

“Oh, yes,” cried Rose, “let grandmama’s stool be the

Waterloo Station, and when the train gets to mama's chair that can be Vauxhall."

George agreed to this plan, and began to set about placing his train in order.

"Now Rose," cried Fred, "you must be a lady with a little girl, going by the train; lady Fanny is the little girl; and Lucy must sit on the floor, behind the stool, and be the man that takes the money."

"And, grandmama," added Rose, "will you be the policeman that makes the signals."

"Oh! yes," said George, "we must have signals. And then some one must call out the names of the stations. *Will* you be the man that calls the names besides making the signals, grandmama?"

Their grandmama said she certainly would, but she did not know how to make the signals. Fred, however, soon explained to her what she was to do. If there was danger she must hold up a red flag, and if the line was clear she must hold up a white one. Rose ran away to find a red handkerchief and soon returned with one; mama lent hers for the white flag. Both were laid before grandmama, and Fred put the picture-book on the floor, and told her that if, for instance, the train seemed likely to run into it, she

was to hold up the red flag, because that was to be called a train standing at a station, and the driver of their train must be warned of it. She promised to attend to this.

“And please, grandmama,” said George, “do not forget that when we get behind mama’s chair, that is Vauxhall, and you must call out.”

“And when they come to the chimney piece,” said Rose, “that must be Basingstoke, must it not, Fred, and you must call that out.”

“Now let us go on,” cried George.

“Stop a minute,” said Fred; “The lady and the little girl have not taken their tickets yet. Now, Lucy.”

“What sal I say? Sal I say gid me the money?” asked Lucy.

“Yes, that will do very well, and you must give them these two pieces of paper for tickets. Now, Ma’am, if you please, the train is going to start in two minutes.”

“But now I have pretended to get in, I may stand by grandmama and look,” said Rose.

“Suppose,” said their mama, “you play at carrying the overland mail, and then you can pretend to cross in the steam-boat and go through France.”

“Oh, but then,” answered Fred, “we should not know

what names to call out; I should rather stay in England: should not you, George?"

"Yes, we had better stay in England. Hold up the white flag, grandmama. Now the bell rings—ting a ting. Be ready, grandmama, we shall soon be at Vauxhall."

When they reached the chair grandmama called out "Vauxhall! Vauxhall!" very loudly and quite as they wished, and when they came to the chimney piece she cried "Basingstoke!" Here the train had to stop ten minutes.

"Take care, guard, and fasten all your doors well," said she. Think of the little girl you have with you, and remember the dreadful accident that happened lately to a baby by a door opening.

"Do tell us about it, grandmama," said Rose, and the driver and guard agreed, that while the train stopped, they might come and hear it; so she began:—

"A lady set off on a journey, lately, in a train, with a baby in her arms."

"Is it true?" asked Fred.

"Yes, quite true. Well, the train was going very fast, when the door of the carriage opened and the baby fell out of her arms to the ground. On went the train. In a moment the baby was left far, far behind. The poor

mother screamed out, but could not make the guard hear, and the train went on to the next station."

"Oh! poor little baby, poor dear little baby, left lying all alone on the ground," said Rose.

"When the mother told what a terrible thing had happened," continued grandmama, "they sent her back immediately in a carriage with an engine attached to it, to the spot where the baby fell out. She dreaded to find him crushed to death by the heavy wheels; but there he lay quite safe on the ground, not hurt at all. You may think how happily she jumped out and took him in her arms again."

The children liked this story very much. George commenced questioning whether the baby had moved at all, and Rose wanted to know whether he was crying when his mother found him; but Fred reminded them that time was up and the bell ringing, so they returned to the train and arrived safely, first at Winchester, then at grandmama's chair, and that was Southampton.

"Now, suppose," said Rose, "we pretend to drive the mail train from Edinburgh to London, as papa will come."

"Oh, yes!" cried George. "Now then, Lucy, be the man again, to take the money, and grandmama, be ready,

please. But you always hold up the white flag. Be sure to look out for danger, will you, please, grandmama."

"But I don't know the names of the stations," said Fred.

"Dunbar first, I think," said his mama, "then Ayton, and Berwick; and you have such a long journey to make that you must go three times round the room at least."

Grandmama called out the names very well, but George complained again that she always held up the white flag; so she took the red one at Berwick, and the train went very slowly, but no danger occurred. Rose, however, declared that she was sure there was a stop here, and that there would be time for another story.

"Do you know," said grandmama, as they all came round her, "how long it will take your papa to come from Edinburgh?"

"Ten hours," said Fred.

"And do you know how long it took my father, when I was a little girl as young as Rose is now, to come from Edinburgh to London?"

"How long, grandmama?"

"Twelve days."

“Twelve days!” said Fred, “but, then he stopped a long time by the way.”

“No, he wished so much to travel quickly that he chose to come by the public coach, which advertised that it would make the journey, if no accident befel it, in ten days in summer, and twelve in winter. I think he said it was drawn by six horses.”

“But what made them be so long?” asked George.

“There were no railways then. No such things had been heard of, and if any one had said that carriages could be drawn by steam instead of horses, people would have laughed and cried ‘nonsense!’ Indeed, I believe even your mama can recollect, when she was very young, hearing some gentlemen declare it was quite impossible.”

“Yes, that I can,” said their mama.

“But, besides that there were no railways,” continued grandmama, “the roads were so bad, that you cannot imagine what they were like. Sometimes you may have seen a cart road across the fields, with deep ruts that the wheels have made in rainy weather; all the roads were like those. The coach went slowly and heavily, jolting along all day, and at night it stopped at some inn, and the passengers slept there and went on again in the morning.

One morning they found that the ruts were full of water, for there had been rain in the night; and as the coach was going on with one wheel deep down among the water, it suddenly came upon a heap of large stones, that had been thrown in to fill up the rut. Over went the coach on its side, and all the people with it. Nobody was much hurt, however, for those that were outside fell into some briars and thick holly-bushes, by the roadside, and those that were inside, all tumbled over one another, but only got some bruises, only they did not know how they were to get out, for one door was under them, and the other up over their heads. At last, the outside passengers and the coachman came scrambling out of the bushes, with their faces and hands scratched, and their clothes torn, and pulled them out of the coach window. I remember my father often making me laugh by telling me how nearly he stuck fast in the narrow window, and that he had to pull off his coat, hat, and wig, before he could get through it."

The children laughed too, at this idea, and then grand-mama told them that "all the gentlemen had to help to get the coach upright again; as to the horses, they stood quite still; they were very glad to be quiet a little while. And then the coach went so slowly all day, for fear of



coming on more stones under the water, that it grew dark before they could reach the inn; so they were obliged to stop at a poor little ale-house by the road side, and all the passengers slept in the barn on some clean straw; but they were very comfortable. This adventure, however, made them a day longer on the journey than they would have been."

"Well!" cried Fred, "I am very glad there are railways now, and that papa can come in ten hours instead of taking twelve days, and being overturned in ruts."

"I can remember when the first railway was made," said his mama. "It was made between Liverpool and Manchester, when I was a little girl. Come here, and I will shew you on the map where it was."

They went to her and saw the place on the map, and then she told them she could remember, a few years afterwards, their grandmama taking her on the Birmingham railway, when it was opened only as far as Boxmoor. "You know where that is?" she said.

"Oh yes, to be sure we do," answered Fred, "because it is only four miles off, and we always go there to catch the train."

"A great many people came there from London at that

time for pleasure, and thought it wonderful to get to the green fields and trees so quickly; and there was a tent near, in which they were taking refreshments. I little thought I should live so near it some day."

"All this time," cried Fred, starting up, "that train is stopping at Berwick. Make haste, driver."

"I don't want to come all the way with it," said George, "it is too far; let us pretend it is going to arrive at Boxmoor, where papa will get out. He will, mama, don't you think so?"

His mama said, certainly she thought he would; so the train once more started. It came on at full speed; the line was not clear; right across where the rails must be—if there really had been rails—lay the large book of pictures, which, by general agreement was to be an empty train standing at a station, yet grandmama never held out the red flag. She really had been so used to hold up the white one, that she quite forgot. The mail train ran into the empty one, and every carriage was upset.

"Here is a dreadful accident!" cried Fred.

"All owing to the man forgetting to hold up the signal of danger," said grandmama.

George looked very mischievous; he knew quite well

what he was doing at the time, and only did it for fun, but he called for help, and pretended to be in a great fright. Little Lucy looked over the stool at the confusion, and was rather troubled about it.

“I think,” said their mama, “that while the train is set to rights, Fred might be the postman and bring the letter bag to the post-office in the village.”

“So I will,” cried he. “Here’s my horse, and here is the bag.”

“See if you have got all the letters safe before you ride off,” said his mama.

Fred looked in for fun, but called out, “there really is a letter.”

“Look who it is to,” said his mama.

“To Fred, Rose, George, and Lucy, from their papa.”

“Oh! what does he say?” “Read it Freddy.” “Leed papa’s letter, Feddy,” cried one after another.

He opened and read—“*Edinburgh, Tuesday.*”

“My dear children, I shall be at Boxmoor to-morrow.”

“Why, that is to-day!” exclaimed Rose.

“So it is, so it is,” cried Fred, and the letter fell on the floor, for he started off his horse in his joy, and began to clap his hands. Rose threw her arms round her mama,

Lucy jumped up on her lap and kissed her, and George began to dance.

“Read on, read more,” cried Rose.

“I shall be at Boxmoor to-morrow, by the train at five o’clock, and you must all come with mama, in the carriage, to meet me.”

“What o’clock is it now?” cried Fred.

“Four,” said his mama, “and here comes the carriage round. Make haste and get ready.”

Away they scampered, calling for nurse, caps, bonnets, and cloaks. Mama was ready in a minute. Grandmama engaged to put the mail train safely in its box while they were gone. Off they drove, and we may be sure they had a very happy meeting.

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## WORK AND PLAY.

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THERE were three little boys, named Edmund, Alfred, and Tommy, who led a very happy life, because their mama used to teach them, and play with them, and walk out with them every day, and when their papa came home in the evening, they all sat together talking over what had happened in the day, round the fire if it was winter, or enjoying themselves in the garden if it was summer. These little boys were very fond of play, but they liked their lessons too, because their mama taught them so pleasantly. Edmund once said that he “really should like his lessons very much, if only he had time for them.”

There were two or three reasons why he had so little time. The first was, because he and his little brothers were very

fond of pets and had several, and it took a long while to attend to them. Even Tommy, who was only two years and a half old, had two kids, a bantam cock and hen, and a jackdaw. Edmund and Alfred had two goats, the father and mother of Tommy's kids ; they had also six hens and a cock ; a Shetland pony called Shag, with a very long mane and tail ; and two pigeons that were so tame they would eat out of their hands. Then there was Turk the dog, who was loved by the whole family ; and there was mama's parrot ; and, besides, they went very often with Luke, the gardener, to take the cow her hay or mangel-wurzel.

They had each a little garden, also, but their gardens fared rather badly, for, though they could work in them when Luke overlooked them, or helped them ; yet they could not manage well by themselves, and liked better to work in the great garden with Luke, at whatever he was about. Sometimes, indeed, when they saw a great many weeds in their own, they would dig them up, and make alterations, and move the plants from one place to another, but, generally, Luke had to come and put all to rights at last, and then they were left till they grew very weedy again.

Then they had a great many playthings, and they had



invented so many games to play at with them, that even if it rained they had no more time than on the finest days. Night and bed-time always came before they had finished half they meant to do.

The first thing they always did when they ran out into the garden, before breakfast, was to rush round the walks with their hoops, with Turk barking and bounding by their sides, calling for Luke to come and help them to feed the goats. Tommy tottered along after his brothers with his, which was a very small one, for it was the wheel of an old cart. He tumbled over it very often, and generally ended by carrying it.

The goats slept in a little shed. They had hay given them in the evening, in case they should be hungry in the night, but in the morning they had some chaff and water, before they were turned out in the field. Luke went with the little boys to feed them, because the father goat, who was called Blackbeard, was apt to be troublesome. He was not ill-natured, but his way of playing was very rough; he would rush at you with his hard forehead, and when you slipped away, he would dance on his hind legs and give a spring sideways at you, that looked very funny at a little distance, but might have knocked you down if you had

been too near; indeed he did knock Alfred down once. But Luke could manage him quite well; he only said gruffly, "I won't have it, Sir! Blackbeard! you know I won't have it!" and Blackbeard went on quite quietly with his chaff. The mother's name was Snowy; she was very pretty and very gentle. The two kids were called Lily and Frolic; they were now old enough to draw Tommy in a little carriage; one was quite white, the other brown and white. They had gay harness and red bows at their ears, and looked very pretty so. Tommy soon got tired of looking at them feeding, and used to ask Luke to open the tool-house, where his jackdaw slept. As soon as he opened the door, Jack used to cry "Craw! craw!" in his loud hoarse way, hop down off his perch and walk out into the yard; Tommy meant to catch him and carry him out, but he never would wait; then Tommy used to run in to the cook, and as soon as she saw him she knew what he wanted, and gave him a little plate with some bits of meat on it, saying to him, "now Master Tommy, be sure you bring back the plate after you've fed him, and ask Luke to wash your fingers at the pump." When Jack saw the plate, he came running up with his wings spread, making a great noise, and ate the pieces of

meat in a minute as Tommy threw them to him ; but the plate and fingers would almost always have been forgotten, if it had not been for Edmund ; as for Jack, he was allowed to go about the yard all day, just as he liked.

The goats took such a time chewing their chaff, that the boys generally left it to Luke to turn them out into the field, and went to see after the hens. By this time they were all wandering over the field, picking up what they could find ; but when they heard their little masters call “ chuck, chuck, chuck,” they came running in all directions, for they knew they should get some barley. Tommy always wanted to feed his own bantams himself ; he used to run quite close, that he might be sure to throw the barley near them ; indeed he generally threw it at them. This frightened them ; they ran away and the large ones who were more bold, got it. Tommy was vexed about it, and said the large ones had no right to eat the barley he threw. It was in vain Edmund and Alfred tried to teach him not to run so close. However, they always took care that the bantams should have enough. The bantams were very pretty, and their names were Prince Albert and Beauty. By this time breakfast was ready, but, before they went to it, they looked for the eggs in the

nests of the hen-house and carried them in ; Tommy liked to have one in each hand, and he never tumbled down and broke them but once.

At breakfast they took care to keep some bread and milk for Turk, who sat all the time looking up in their faces, with his red tongue hanging out, and also for the parrot ; and after breakfast, they helped to clean her cage, and took it by turns to fill her little tin. She was named Polly, as all parrots are, nearly ; and she was very clever. She could say all their names quite plainly in a funny voice, like an old woman speaking through her nose ; also, "How d'ye do?" "Very well, thank you," and "Turk, poor little fellow!" Besides these things she went on with a great deal of chattering, and sometimes gave very loud screams. Once she made such a noise at dinner time that they hung Tommy's warm coat over her cage. She was quite quiet in the dark, but when they took it off, they found that she had picked all the buttons off it with her sharp beak, and when they scolded her, she only climbed about her perches and cried, "Ha ! he ! ha !" as if she was laughing.

Turk was very clever too. He could fetch and carry, jump through a hoop, sit up and beg, keep a piece of

bread on his nose for five minutes, and never attempt to eat it till one of them cried, "fire!" then he threw it up in the air and caught it in his mouth as it fell. If Edmund and Alfred shewed him a ball or a stone, and told him to look at it well, and then carried him to the bottom of the garden and said, "Fetch it, sir!" he would run back into the house for it and bring it. Lately, they had taught him a new trick. This was to hold Alfred's book in his mouth for him to learn his lesson.

When his young masters went to garden with Luke, Turk took the opportunity to have a quiet nap on the door mat. If Luke was digging, Edmund and Alfred took their little spades and dug too, and Tommy carried handfuls to the barrow. They held his nails, shreds, and hammer for him, if he was training the trees; and tied up the carnations to sticks as well as they could, if that was what he was about. He often had to do their work over again, but still they liked it better than working in their own gardens. Mama generally came out while they were all very busy, and helped a little, or romped on the grass with them, or made them help her to pick fresh flowers, or to go with Luke to cut the vegetables for

dinner. If there were peas to pick they liked that very much, and also liked shelling them, but they usually grew tired before they had finished and took them to the cook.

The time for work was eleven o'clock; but they took care to be in the school-room a few minutes before, that they might set their own scholars to work, for they pretended to keep a school of their own, and liked to set the scholars to learn while they were doing their lessons, that they might be ready when the proper time came. Their eldest scholar was a donkey with panniers on his back, who usually carried an old doll called Margery, to market; but now he was studying astronomy, and had to look well at the celestial globe. The next was a pig on wheels, who was learning music, and was to stand quietly and stare at a music-book; the youngest was a shepherdess out of a box of sheep, who had never been taught when she was little, so now she was placed on a large book to learn to read. Mama allowed them to leave their scholars in their places, because they were never inattentive nor thought of play while they were at work; but she was obliged to tell Alfred that Turk must not hold his book any more, because Tommy could not help laughing at him.

and this made Edmund look up from his writing; besides Alfred was not steady. He played with his garden roller, took off one shoe, and did not learn well.

When lessons were over on the day that this had happened, they resolved that Turk should come to school with the donkey, the pig, and the shepherdess, and his lesson should be to sit up with the book in his mouth till he was told to move. So there he sat very patiently. They went to dinner and shut him in, quite forgetting him, for they did not intend to leave him so. Well, after dinner, when his plate, full of bones and scraps, was ready for him, he was nowhere to be found. They were to go out for a long expedition with their mama; Tommy in the goat carriage, and Shag to carry Edmund and Alfred by turns, till they came to a beautiful open heath that there was some miles off; then mama was to sit down in the shade, and let the kids and Shag graze, while they scampered about till it was time to go home. They often managed so. Of course Turk must go with them. They looked for him in the kitchen, in the garden, and up stairs. At last they went to the school-room, and there sat the poor fellow with his book in his mouth, just as they had left him. They patted and praised him; they kissed him and called him all

sorts of kind names, while he whined and barked for joy, and jumped higher than their heads, then rushed off to the dining-room, cleared his plate in half a minute, and bounded off to the front door, where, after startling Shag, and almost making Frolic and Lily run away with the carriage, he at last stood quiet till they were ready to go.

In the evening they told their papa this wonderful thing about Turk. All the time, Turk was lying on the rug in the midst of them, and knew quite well he was being praised, for he kept wagging his tail and looking very happy and proud. After his master had patted him and called him a good dog, he told Edmund and Alfred to come and sit on each knee; Tommy was already in mama's lap, and then he told them a curious story about a dog, which he had found, he said, in an amusing book he had read lately.\* This was the story he told.

“There was a gentleman who had a Newfoundland dog, that would go back long distances to find anything that he was ordered to fetch. One day, this gentleman, riding with a friend, put a mark upon a shilling so that he might

\* Chambers' Useful and Entertaining Tracts.



know it again, shewed it to his dog, then placed it under a large stone by the roadside, and rode on for three miles; then he told the dog to go and fetch the shilling. Back ran the dog, but he never returned all that day.

Next morning early, however, what was the gentleman's surprise to see his dog come home, bringing a pair of cloth trousers in his mouth. He felt in the pocket; there he found a watch and money, and among it was the marked shilling! Very soon there was an advertisement put in the papers, offering a reward to whoever would bring back this property; so the gentleman took back the trousers, watch, and money, and then he heard how it all happened. Another gentleman had passed on horse-back by the same way he had travelled the day he left the shilling, and had found a dog howling and scratching at a large stone by the road, but it was so heavy he could not raise it; so this gentleman got off his horse, raised the stone, and seeing the shilling—which he never imagined was what the dog wanted—put it in his trousers pocket. He remembered that the dog followed him all the way he rode, and he went twenty miles, but he never observed that he went up into his bedroom at night; however, it was certain he must have done so, and hidden under the bed till all was

quiet, and then have jumped out of the window—which was left open because it was very hot—carrying off his prize.”

They all thought this story was very curious and very amusing, and asked their papa to tell them some more anecdotes of dogs; but bed time was come, so he promised he would another evening.







THE MORNING BATH

## GOOD ANGELS.



VERY few of us have not some relations or friends in India, that great country, eight thousand miles distant from England, where the sun beams down fierce heat, and palm trees grow, and elephants roam in the wild forests; where there are the highest mountains in the world and great rivers; where the natives are of a dusky colour, and the English, though masters of the soil, feel like strangers. Their children never thrive in that distant land; but as soon as they reach five or six years of age, they grow weak and thin, and must be sent to England. This is a great grief to their parents. It is sad to send their dear little boys and girls so far, far away; and the poor children themselves can seldom find as happy a home as that where

they were born, and where they have lived during the first years of their lives. Very often, too, they are not so well managed among strangers as they would have been in their own homes, and many faults in their characters are owing to their losing the influence of their mother's love so soon.

Louisa and Clara Seymour were twin sisters, who were sent away from India when they were five years old. They had a black nurse to take care of them on the voyage. She was very fond of them and very indulgent to them, and she had a great deal to do to comfort them at first, after parting from their dear papa and mama. They cried very bitterly; but they were only five years old and soon forgot their grief. Their ayah, as these black nurses are called, petted them, flattered them, humoured all their whims and fancies, and at last, when they reached England, they were very like spoiled children.

Clara was so gentle in her nature that she did not suffer so much from the ayah's indulgence as Louisa, who was passionate and wilful in character. They went to live with a kind old aunt of their mama's, who had never been used to children, and did not know how to manage them. She could not bear to hear Louisa cry; so, whenever she was

out of humour or unreasonable, she did something like the ayah, she petted and flattered her. Clara loved her sister so much that she gave up to her in everything, and one nurse was turned away after another, because she did not like them. Still, though every one tried to please her, she might be heard crying and complaining many times a-day,—"I don't like it!" "I will have it!" "I won't do it!" "Naughty nurse!"—these were the words continually sounding through the house.

When these little girls were eight years old their mama came home from India, because her own health required the change, bringing with her a little sister called Blanche, who had been born after they left her. How happy she was to fold her dear children in her arms, and how happy they were to be once more with her. They had almost forgotten her face, but it soon seemed familiar to them, and they were enchanted with their pretty little sister.

"Will Blanche love me?" asked Louisa.

"Will you deserve Blanche's love, dear child?" answered her mama. "Will you be a good sister to her, bear patiently with her if she troubles you, cherish and care for her as a sister should? These are the questions for you to ask."

But these were new questions to Louisa. She had never thought of loving Clara so.

Louisa went on very well for a few days. She was happy, and the change pleased her and amused her; she forgot herself, and ceased to be peevish and troublesome. In a little while, however, contentions between her and her maid began, and especially in the morning when she and Clara went into their bath.

"I don't like it, I won't bathe this morning," she cried, about a week after her mama's return; "I don't care what you say, Clara, I will not bathe."

Yet she had always been used to bathe; she did not really dislike it, and only felt capricious. She shook off Clara's hand as she spoke, and turning round, saw her mama standing beside her. Louisa was ashamed, and blushed a little, then stammered out, "let Blanche come in and have her bath first, and then I will."

"No," said her mama, "I cannot bring her in while you are here; she has never seen disobedience, and I would not have her taught it."

Louisa was struck by these words, and felt shocked; she went into the water, but her pride was hurt, and she felt out of humour with every one.



"I do so long to go out in the garden this morning," said Clara, as they dressed; "you will come, Louisa?"

"No I will not," she replied, I want to stay and play in the breakfast-room; you know very well I want you to stay there and play."

"Very well, dear," answered Clara, but with rather a disappointed voice.

Again Louisa saw her mama's grave and sad eyes fixed on her, and something in her heart reproached her, but this time she had not courage to resist the spirit of pride which forbade her to give up her point. She was, however, peevish at play, and nothing pleased her because she was displeased with herself.

In the afternoon they all went out to walk with their mama. It was a beautiful place, with a large garden and sloping lawn. Blanche was so merry and so pretty, that both her sisters were charmed with her; she was very fair and as pale as a white lily, with curling golden hair and blue eyes full of joy and love. Louisa, who generally became tired and fretful in a short time when out walking, quite forgot her peevish fancies, as she and Clara led this sweet little creature between them. She had a large ball and presently began to play with

Blanche, and to throw it while the little girl ran to catch it.

Mrs. Seymour sat down on a garden chair to watch them, and Clara stood by her mama with one hand in hers; Louisa threw the ball first in one direction, then in another, and faster and faster ran the little girl after it.

“Not that way! Do not throw it down the bank,” cried her mama.

But Louisa never obeyed any one at once; she always said “why?”—or “why not?” She threw the ball; away ran Blanche down the steep bank, lost her footing, and rolled down, unable to stop herself, till she fell into a piece of water overshadowed with weeping willows which bounded that portion of the lawn.

Louisa shrieked; Mrs. Seymour rushed to the water, plunged in, caught the little child by the clothes before she sank, and raised her in her arms. Clara, trembling with fear and with tears streaming down her cheeks, held out her hands to help her up the slippery bank, and then walked by her to the house, trying—as well as she could command her voice—to assist in comforting the shivering, terrified little Blanche.

Louisa had thrown herself on the grass on her face, crying bitterly. She lay so for a long while.

“Come in darling,” said Clara’s gentle, tender voice at last; “come with me. You did not mean, you could not help it; Blanche is laid in her warm bed. Come in to mama.”

Louisa rose slowly. “I do not want to see mama,” she sobbed.

“But she wants you,” and Clara threw her arms round her sister’s neck and tried gently to raise her from the grass; and Louisa said to herself, “I will be obedient,” and went with her slowly and mournfully.

This had been a terrible lesson to her. Her heart said within her, “I ought to have known mama had a reason for saying ‘not that way.’ I have done very wrong; Blanche might have been drowned.”

When she went with Clara to her mama’s room, where Blanche lay in her little bed, her mama looked in her face as if to read her thoughts and feelings there, then took her in her arms and kissed her without speaking. All Louisa’s shame and sorrow burst forth at once.

“Oh, mama! mama! Will Blanche be very ill? Have I made her very ill? Have I made you very unhappy?”

She might have been drowned ! Oh, mama, if she had been drowned !”

“ We say in our daily prayer, ‘Thy will be done.’ These words must be not only words, my child ; we must feel them in heart and spirit.”

Thoughts quite new to Louisa were passing through her mind.

“ Remember who it was that said ‘not my will, but thine be done.’ You are only eight years old, yet you may think of those words till they become to you like a good angel.”

No one spoke for a long while. The sisters had each taken a hand of their mama, while she sat anxiously watching little Blanche, who lay in a troubled sleep, breathing heavily.

This day of anxiety was only the first of many. Blanche was very delicate, and the shock had been too severe for her. She was very ill, and for one day her life was in danger. During her whole illness, her sisters waited on her and their mama constantly. They never spoke above a whisper ; they never thought of play ; they watched their mama’s eyes to see if she wanted anything, and the only strife was who should go for it. Sometimes they persuaded

her to lie down and sleep while they sat by Blanche, and she said she could trust to their love better than to any other person's eye or care.

When at last their little darling began to recover, they brought her play-things and flowers, they showed her pictures; they amused her so well that she never had to suffer from dullness or weariness, and their mama could take the rest she wanted so much, without any anxiety.

What had become of Louisa's fretfulness and selfishness? While she feared that her little sister would die, she had no trouble to drive them away; she never thought of herself at all, and the habit of being useful, of thinking and feeling for others, even for that short time, was a help to her. It was when danger was over that she began to be tempted to be troublesome, to want people to attend to her, to fret and complain because things were not done exactly according to her will. It was then that the words her mama had said to her came to her mind. She began to think "Is this the feeling mama wanted me to have? Is this doing the will of my Father, as I pray to do?" Then she said to herself, "Not my will but Thine!" These words became to her a guide and help; something like a good angel, as her mama had said.

When Blanche was once more well, joy and gladness seemed to fill the house. Clara, who had always loved Louisa dearly though she was often made unhappy by her, felt as if a new life had begun for her; and Louisa was like a new creature. The good old aunt who had suffered so much from her fretfulness came to see them, and was quite astonished.

“Why what have you done to her?” she said to Mrs. Seymour, “It’s like magic. I never saw a child so improved! Well, it *is* wonderful.”

Everything went on smoothly now. At the morning bath, there was no longer a contention as to when or how “Miss Louisa would bathe,” or whether she would at all. She jumped in full of health and spirits, and all her thought was whether she should be in time to amuse Blanche with her play-things while her mama poured the cool refreshing water over her; and Clara stood by telling funny stories, and saying things to make her laugh.

One day when Louisa had laid down a very interesting book that her aunt had given her, to help Clara with some work which she was anxious to finish, her mama said to her fondly, “I see the good angel is always with you.”

Louisa's eyes beamed with joy as she said softly, "Dear mama."

"We have good angels in many forms, my child. Sometimes they come to us in tears and sorrow, and we do not know them at first. The grief I had to suffer when little Blanche was so ill, has been a good angel to me."

"How, dear mama?"

"That good angel gave me a sweet little Louisa. She was always dear to me, but now she is as sweet as she is dear."



## MAY DAY AT HOME.

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MR. FIELDING'S pretty cottage was situated in a beautiful part of Devonshire. A fine river flowed through the valley near it, and, on the hill beyond, there were the ruins of an old castle among thick woods.

Everything about the cottage looked cheerful. It was a pleasant little home, and there was always something lively going on in it, for there was a large family of all ages from sixteen down to four. The cottage had all manner of corners and angles; bow windows and square windows; balconies, porches, and verandas; and under the thatch there were several little lattice windows with roses peeping in at them, and swallows' nests in the corners, and early on the summer mornings bright faces would peep out to see if





SPRING. PLAYING AT MAY-DAY



the little swallows were poking their heads out of their nests, and if the old ones were coming with food.

It was impossible to be lazy in the morning there, for, besides the twittering of the swallows in the summer, the sparrows kept up a continual fuss in the thatch all the year round, and the larks, thrushes, and blackbirds began to sing at the first light of dawn, Before six o'clock, therefore, Margaret, the eldest of the sisters, was sure to call up all the younger ones, and the whole family was soon stirring.

Behind the cottage there was an orchard full of apple, and pear and plum trees, and several cherry trees too. These were lovely in spring with their blossoms white and pink, and the pleasure of eating the fruit was only a small part of the good things of the orchard. There was, besides, all the pleasure of gathering it, climbing the ladder, holding the baskets, carrying presents to the neighbours, storing away what would keep, and helping to preserve what would not. As to the cherries, the birds ate so many, that all that could be done was to eat in company with them, and it was no easy matter to get anything like a fair share. One spring it was resolved to try and persuade the little thieves to keep to one tree, and Charles put up a

board in it, on which he wrote, in large letters, "Birds may eat cherries here ;" and at the same time he tied up flags, and mounted old hats, and ragged coats, and worn out brooms in the others ; but it was all of no use. The birds hopped about, looking out of one eye at these odd looking things for half an hour or so, but very soon found out that there was no harm in them, and began eating faster than ever.

Near the garden gate that led into the field, was an old walnut tree, with a seat under it. This was a favourite place for play, and generally you might see dolls, hoops, and other playthings lying about there. It was great fun to thrash down the walnuts in autumn, and very pleasant to crack them in winter by the fire. There was also an old mulberry tree on the lawn, that bore an immense crop of fruit every year, and in October the children generally had crimson tips to their fingers, and very red lips, because their eldest brothers used to climb the tree, and lower down basket after basket full of ripe mulberries to them.

In the front of the cottage door was a thorn tree, that stood there before Mr. Fielding was born. Indeed, he said he believed it was planted by his grandfather, but it still put forth its little round green buds every spring, though

it was so ancient and venerable, and in May it was covered with its silvery flowers. In winter it bore quantities of red berries, and made quite a store-house for the birds when the snow was on the ground. The cottage was never without music, for the robins who sing in cold weather as well as warm, were always there—two or three of them—with waistcoats as red as the berries. They were looking out for crumbs, and sang as loud as possible to put the children in mind to bring them some.

This good old thorn tree, besides providing beauty, music, and food, afforded a delightful shade all summer, and not only were there seats placed under it, on the soft mossy grass, but its twisted branches made the pleasantest resting places in all directions. Some of them swept the ground, others spread upwards after making a curve downwards; so that it was easy to climb to its very top, and Charles and Willie, the two eldest boys generally did, and sat there perched like two great birds, when all the family collected about it in the warm evenings. Mr. and Mrs. Fielding, and Margaret and Laura would sit on the garden chairs. There was a low branch with ivy twisted round it, that was called "Alice's seat," and there sat little Alice, the youngest of the family, with cheeks as red as

ripe cherries. A stage higher in the tree, Albert and Florence took their station, and up above them were Willie and Charles. Fido, the dog, was sure to be of the party, and lay stretched on the grass fast asleep, but ready for anything that might be going on.

One evening in spring, when the little green buds were beginning to swell, and to give promise that they would deserve their pretty name this year, and burst into flower by the first of May, Mr. Fielding began to tell how May-day used to be kept in England in the old times, when the ruined castle was a grand place, and its lords inhabited it. He told them that kings and queens kept their May-day then. Henry the Eighth went out "Maying" with a great train of courtiers; and so did Queen Elizabeth, and in all the country places the squire and his dame, and the lord and lady of the castle went to see the sports of the villagers. He told them how early in the morning the boys and girls went to gather branches of May in the hedges, and flowers in the woods; and how there was a May-pole set up in some pleasant green nook, covered with garlands and streamers, and how they all danced round it. One of the village girls was chosen Queen of the May; some country lad dressed up in green and carry-

ing a bow and arrow was to act Robin Hood, and some pretty lass was Maid Marian. Then they had several characters to make sport and fun. One would stuff his smock frock that he might look portly, and call himself Friar Tuck; another would tie on a horse's tail and a painted head, and act the "hobby-horse," by prancing and kicking; and another dressed up to look like a dreadful dragon would flounder about and run after the timid ones. Altogether, May-day was one of the merriest and pleasantest of the old holidays, he said.

"Why should we not keep May-day?" cried Charles from his high perch.

"To be sure; do let us keep May-day," was echoed from all parts of the tree, "and Charles shall be Robin Hood, and carry his bow and arrows," added Florence.

"And I want to be Maid Marian," said little Alice, who thought the name sounded pretty.

"So you shall," resumed Charles, "and Florence shall be queen."

Pretty little Florence was a favourite with every one, and perhaps they rather spoiled her, but she was so affectionate and good-hearted they really could not help it.

Mrs. Fielding reminded them that the only reason

against the plan was that she and their papa were going from home, and were going to take Laura, Charles, Willie, and Annie with them, leaving Margaret to take care of the little ones ; and suppose they should not come home before the first of May ?

However, they decided that this was not likely ; that in short they *must* come home by the first, and that all the preparations should be made to keep the day.

Accordingly, while the rest of the family were away, Margaret and the three youngest were busily employed in getting the things ready for May-day. The May-pole was a very tall one. It was the entire trunk of a poplar tree that had been cut down the Autumn before, and Margaret made a long pink streamer which was fastened to the very top, and smaller green and white flags that were fastened lower down on it. On the last day of April they went into the woods and fields and gathered immense bunches of wild flowers. Baskets and baskets full of primroses, violets, cowslips, harebells, anemones, and all the other spring flowers they brought in. The may must not be gathered till the morning ; and they had plenty to do making wreaths and garlands. Margaret showed them how to plait rushes for the wreaths, and to fix the



flowers in so that the stalks could lie in water all night. Every minute they listened for the sound of wheels.

At last a letter was brought in ; they gathered round Margaret. It brought sad news ; their papa and mama were detained longer than they had expected, and could not return, they feared, for a few days

Florence threw down the wreath she was making, and burst into tears.

“ Oh let all the flowers fade then,” she cried ; all we have done is of no use. I don’t care for anything.”

“ Don’t cry so, darling Flory ! don’t cry,” said the little ones, kissing her.

“ Go and pull the flags off the May-pole,” sobbed Florence.

“ Florence, dear,” said Margaret kneeling beside her, “ dry your tears and try to listen to me. If papa or mama were ill, you might cry so bitterly, but they will be home safe and well soon, I hope ; meanwhile, let us try to make the best of it we can. Our wreaths will fade and be wasted, if we do not use them, and little Alice and Albert will be sadly disappointed. Let us play at May-day as well as we can by ourselves to-morrow, and let us gather fresh flowers before they come home, to make the rooms gay and pretty for them.”

After some time poor Florence listened to these comforting words. She dried her tears, and said that if it was a lovely May morning, she would go with Albert and Alice to gather the boughs, and would try to be happy if she possibly could.

It was a lovely May morning; the sun shone bright, the birds sang; so Margaret gave them their breakfast very early, and sent them off into the woods. They resolved that they would take a long ramble, and gather plenty of flowers besides the may-boughs, that they might pass the time and not think of mama and all of them too much. Fido went with them, as he always did.

They took such a long ramble that it was almost noon when they returned loaded with their flowers and boughs, so they were very glad to see Margaret waiting for them under the walnut tree. She had brought some bread and milk to refresh them; and when they had rested, she said she would dress them up there, ready to go in procession to the May-pole.

Albert said he did not know how to be Robin Hood or Friar Tuck, and would rather be a drummer, and beat his drum before the queen. He had left it lying there under the tree, so he slung it on, and Margaret put a feather in

his cap and tied a red scarf on him. Alice still wished to be Maid Marian, so Margaret thought her straw hat would do very well with some flowers in it, which she would fasten on presently, but meanwhile she must put on the queen's crown. It was made entirely of May flowers, and she had her green scarf, and was to have large bunches of flowers besides on her sleeves and in her sash. Albert stood looking on and admiring, but Alice was busy dressing up Fido, who must have a wreath on too. When all were ready they kissed their kind sister Margaret, and chose out the most beautiful fresh primroses and violets they had, for her bouquet, and put a wreath round her pretty curling hair. Then to make a better procession they resolved that Albert's horse should be dragged with them as hobby-horse, and that Alice's coach should bring the doll, who might be the lady of the castle. They put the coachman and footman in their places, but the lady had to sit on the top because she was too large to get in.

They now moved forward ; Margaret walked first ; then Alice, drawing the carriage ; then Albert, drumming and pulling the horse, which was fastened by a string to one elbow ; last of all the queen. Fido was intended to walk behind her, and generally he was an obedient dog, but to-day he

would rush on, barking, wagging his tail, and bounding about. When they came in sight of the thorn tree they saw it hung with garlands. Margaret had decorated it beautifully, and the May-pole was fastened in the middle of it and stood high up above it, with the flags; they thought it lovely.

The queen took her seat in great state under the tree, and Margaret placed her sceptre in her hand; it was a white wand covered with every different kind of flower that could be collected. At the same moment a bunch of cowslips as large as her head fell into her lap, another of primroses at her feet; a great bouquet of lilacs on one side, and as she raised her face to see where they came from, a shower of violets almost blinded her. But she saw through the shower very plainly the merry faces peeping down out of the tree, every one crowned with a wreath. They were all there, Laura, Charles, Willie, and Annie, and at the moment when she was going to exclaim, "But papa and mama!" they appeared at the cottage door.

The queen forgot all her dignity. She started from her throne.

There were rejoicings and kisses and all manner of explanations, how it was that suddenly papa found they

could go home after all ; and how when they arrived they found Margaret dressing up the tree and determined to surprise Florence and the little ones ; and how they had gathered all those flowers as they came through the country. Oh ! it was delightful. It was impossible to help dancing for joy. They all joined hands. Mama began to sing, they sang in chorus and danced round the May-pole with all their hearts. They went on dancing, singing, and playing games for a long time. They certainly had dinner, for they felt very strong and comfortable as evening drew on, but they scarcely knew how they managed to go in and eat it.

Suddenly, when the games were at their height, an unexpected misfortune occurred. The sky became black with clouds, and pelting rain began to fall. It was of no use to crowd under the tree and hope it would soon be over ; it dripped fast through the leaves in three minutes. They were obliged to hurry in. But before any one had time to begin lamenting, Margaret's voice was heard—

“ Let us clear the school-room and dance there.”

“ To be sure—what fun !—clear all the things.”

In a minute, globes, maps, desks, slates, books disappeared,

and there was a good large room for them ; but it looked rather empty. Away ran Charles and Willie, heedless of wet jackets, and brought in the garlands, and Margaret and Laura made festoons of them round the walls ; then the green boughs and May boughs, and they made a complete arbour at one end to take rest in when they were tired. It looked like a ball-room at once.

As they put the finishing strokes a carriage stopped at the door. It looked, as they saw in at its window through the rain, as if it were full of flowers, but presently it was discovered that these were only decorations on the heads of all the eight cousins, that lived some miles off, and had come very closely packed, to keep May-day with them. It was mama's thought, as she passed their home that morning. Here was another joyful surprise ; and who should they have brought on the box but Joseph Waller, the fiddler, who was employed at all the dances and merry-makings in the country. The sound of his fiddle set everyone dancing again, and they kept it up joyously ; no matter how the rain pelted outside, they were too merry to mind. But before the sun set, the clouds dispersed, a golden light was shed through the air, and they opened the windows. A delicious scent of the spring lilacs, and

of the young leaves of the birch trees, filled the room, and the old thorn, with his flags fluttering above, sent in his sweet message with the rest.

They stopped dancing, to enjoy the delicious freshness, and Mrs. Fielding took the opportunity to call them into the dining room, where supper was ready. The happy party took their places round the large table, and it was agreed by everyone, that, however grand the pageants might be in old times, they could not be more merry and pleasant than their May-day at home.



## THE FARM SUPPER.

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THERE was going to be a great supper at Farmer Bright's, at his hay harvest home. All the haymakers that had been employed in the fields were to be at it, with their wives and husbands; or if they were not married, they might bring a brother or sister. All the regular farm servants were to be there, and each to bring one friend; two or three neighbours were coming to share the feast also, and among others, Mr. Bright's niece, Nancy; cousin Nancy, as the children called her.

Nancy was a great favourite with the children. She was not little, like them; she was quite old, for she was eighteen. But then she was so merry, and so goodnatured.





SUMMER. HAY-UN-MAKING.



When she came they were sure to have fun, and never to feel dull for a minute.

The farmer had thought of nothing but his hay for several weeks. Even the maids that generally helped the the mistress, as Mrs. Bright was called, had been out at work in the fields all the time they could spare. The children had helped too; Jenny and Harry could rake and fork pretty well, and even little Jack and Dick did their best.

It was a fine crop, and the farmer was in good spirits about it. Two immense stacks were finished, and the last would be finished by evening; so Mrs. Bright was very busy in doors getting supper ready.

It was an old fashioned farm house, with a great kitchen that had a long oak table down the middle of it, and a great chimney, with an oak mantel-piece and a blazing wood fire; but though it was summer time it did not feel too hot, for it was so very high, and long, and wide.

Everything in the house looked very clean and bright, and like holiday time. The children ran in and out, often getting in their mother's way, and hardly knowing what to be about. Sometimes they tried to help—and they really were a little useful—when she was laying the cloth. What

a number of knives and forks, and plates she put round the table ! Whenever she went to the larder, they went after her and peeped in ; they did not care much about the great hams and joints of meat ; what they thought looked nicest, was the row of cherry pies.

At last they ran off to the gate to watch for Nancy, and Jack climbed up and sat astride on the top.

“ Here comes a chaise ! ” he cried.

“ But it’s only Mr. Bolt from the mill,” said Jenny.

“ Ah, but there’s somebody behind ; it looks like Nancy.”

And it was Nancy. There she was, with her merry black eyes and rosy cheeks. They ran by the side of the chaise, up to the door, capering for joy, and when she got out they almost pulled her down with their hearty welcome.

“ Now, Nancy, my girl,” said Mrs. Bright, as soon as she had shaken hands with her, “ you cannot do a better turn for me, than to take the children into the field till near supper time, and keep them out of my way.”

There was nothing the children could have liked better. Away they ran to the field with Nancy, who seemed quite as pleased as they were.

“ Now then, let us have some fun,” cried Harry, “ there’s a famous hay-cock.”

“So it is!” said Nancy, very quietly, and in a moment he was buried under it.

“Keep him down!” cried Jenny, but down she went herself by his side.

On came Jack to pile more hay, but in a minute Nancy had laid him between them and thrown Dick on the top of all. They scrambled out, first one, then another, but she caught one by the foot, another by the frock, and smothered them all again. They laughed, they shouted, they cried “pull her down,” but she was too quick for them, they never could catch her. They made such a noise that the haymakers could not help stopping to look at them, and a baby, that one of the labourer’s wives had in her arms, kept kicking and crowing, and staring at them.

At last, as Nancy was running after Jack, she caught her foot in the long grass and down she went close to a large haycock. She caught Jack by the leg, but he got away and came back to help Jenny and Harry, who had got arms full of hay to pile on her. Then came Dick with a bundle as large as himself. She could not get away this time. They covered her entirely over. Not a morsel even of her gown could be seen, and they were

sure she could not see out, so they ran and hid behind a haycock.

Every minute they expected that she would jump up, find them, and tumble the haycock over them, but they sat crouched up as quiet as mice.

“Here she comes!” cried Jenny.

No, it was only the labourer’s wife with the baby. “Don’t tell Nancy where we are,” said they.

. After her came the waggon full of hay up the field. “Don’t tell cousin Nancy where we are,” they said to the carter.

They peeped round the haycock, first one, then the other. The heap where they left her did not move. How very quiet she was! They crept softly along towards her, starting back every instant with the thought that she would jump up and catch them, but she did not. They went to the very place, began to move the hay, peeped under it, poked down their hands into it; felt down to the very grass.

She was not there! She was gone!

Where could she be gone? Perhaps this was not the place where they left her? Yes it was, they were sure it was, for there was Jack’s shoe that he lost while they

were flinging the hay at her. They looked all round, she was nowhere to be seen.

They ran about peeping into every bush and behind every hedge. They asked the haymakers if they had seen her; but nobody had. They met the empty waggon coming down the field, and asked the carter; but he did not seem to hear, and went whistling on.

While they were wandering about in this way, their mother called them in to get ready for supper.

“Oh, mother!” cried Dick, almost crying, “we have smothered Nancy, and we can’t find her anywhere.”

“Here’s a pretty piece of business,” said she; “but it cannot be helped. You must come in and get ready. See what figures you are! hay stuck all over your hair, and such dirty faces!”

They went up and put on their best clothes, washed their faces and hands, and smoothed their hair; constantly looking out of the window to see if Nancy was coming.

Presently they saw the strangest looking old woman hobbling up to the house. She came leaning on her stick, and muttering to herself. She had a very brown face and long black hair hanging down on each side, and wore a red

cloak and blue petticoat, and an old black bonnet that shaded her eyes, and by the look of her mouth, you would have said she had no teeth. When she reached the door, she began to sing a strange sort of song, in a very sweet voice.

The children ran down to see this gypsy woman nearer.

“Well, my little dears,” said she in a squeaking voice, as they came to the door, “I think I have some presents for you in my bag. A friend of yours down there under the hay gave them to me for you.”

“Oh, then you have seen Nancy,” cried Jenny. “Tell us where she is!”

“But surely you will let me give you a pretty new doll, and a top and whip and ball for these good little boys.”

“No, no, we don’t want them till she comes back,” said Harry. “I want Nancy,” said Dick sturdily.

“Well, at any rate let me tell you a story first,” persisted the gypsy.

“No, no, we want Nancy,” said one after another.

“Why, how came this old gypsy here?” said the farmer who had just come in.

“If you will please to let me have some of your good



supper, your honour," said she, "I will sing you some good songs."

"But find Nancy first," said Dick.

By this time several of the haymakers had come in ready for supper, all dressed in their Sunday clothes, looking so clean and nice you could hardly have known them; and some of the girls who had helped too. They gathered round the gypsy, and some of them asked her to tell their fortunes.

"By and bye; all in good time," she said, "when these little dears have had their presents."

"I tell you," said Jenny, "we will not have them till Nancy can give them to us herself."

"Since nothing else will satisfy you then," said the gypsy, "let me see! How had you best set about finding her? You must go into the yard, one walking slowly after the other, and look in every waggon there. If she's in none of them, you must look in every corner of the barn; and, if you do not find her there, you must search the calves' pen. If you still cannot see her, go to the great hay-stack, and look whether they have thrown her up to the top of it with the hay."

The children did exactly as the gypsy told them. Nancy

was neither in the waggons, the barn, nor among the calves; so they walked one after another to the great hay-stack, and there she was sitting at the top.

They were enchanted to see their dear Nancy once more, and the moment she had clambered down the ladder they seized hold of her, two holding by each hand. They were so afraid lest she should escape them again, that they thought of nothing so much as leading her safe in to the house, though they wanted to ask her twenty questions; so they hurried her in to come to supper and see the funny old gypsy woman that told them where to find her. But when they got in the gypsy was gone. She would go, their mother said, just after they went out.

Now came all the bustle of sitting down to supper. It was a capital supper, and every one enjoyed it. They had such appetites! The farmer sat at one end of the table and the mistress at the other, and carved for the company, and nothing was heard but the clatter of knives and forks for a long time. At last they had leisure to talk and laugh a little, and then they got very merry. After supper the farmer sang a good song; then two or three haymakers; then Nancy was called upon.

Nancy sang very sweetly and merrily. As she went on

Jenny began to look very knowing and to smile to herself, and when the song was over she went round to Nancy, touched her blue gown and said, "Ah! Nancy; what have you done with your red cloak? I've found you out."

"Ah! ah! Nancy," said Harry, "I know you were the gypsy. What have you done with your bag?"

"You have not so far to go to look for it as in the calves' pen," said she. "What is this hanging behind my chair?"

The bag was opened, and in it they found the doll and top and whip and ball. After the first pleasure of looking at these nice things was over, they all began asking, "How did you get away?" "when did you come out of the field?" and all manner of questions. But the table was cleared away and dancing began, and there was no time to talk. There was a very happy dance, and the children had a great deal of fun, but every now and then Dick and Jack looked very grave and began pondering over Nancy's strange escape from the hay. So she called them to her, and told them to go and ask Jem the carter how it was. They ran to him and listened attentively to his story, and then shook their heads at Nancy and said, "It was too bad

to play them such a trick as to creep out and get into the waggon !”

“ Never mind, never mind,” cried she. “ Come and have a dance with me all hands round and make it up.”

At last it was time to leave off dancing. The farm supper was over, and all the guests as they went, said they never spent a merrier evening, and they hoped the farmer would have as good a harvest next year, and many more of them.







AUTUMN. FATHER AT DINNER.

## A SAILOR BOY'S STORY.

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FAR out at sea an emigrant ship sailed on her course to Australia. It was seven days since the crew saw the last point of the white cliffs of England. The sun was getting low and cast a golden track of light across the dark blue water. The passengers who had till then been mostly below suffering from sea-sickness, had many of them come up to enjoy the fresh air, and walked up and down the deck or sat watching the waves.

The sailors gathered in the fore part of the ship were enjoying a little rest, for the light wind was steady, the sails were set, and there was little work to be done.

They had fallen into chat about home and old stories, and an old man among them had given a history of his

long life of hard work and struggle, while the rest smoked their pipes and listened. When he had ended he clapped a sailor boy, who sat beside him, on the shoulder and told him it was his turn now.

"I am sure you have seen more than your share of troubles," said he, "in your short life. You often look as full of care as an old man, and when I told my sorrows you sighed so hard, it seemed as if you knew what sorrow was."

The others pressed the boy to tell his story, so he began.

"When first I can remember anything, I lived in my father's little cottage on a hill side in Scotland. There was father and mother, and four brothers of us, and one little sister. Oh it was a pleasant place. The wind blew so fresh up the bank, and a clear burn, that's what you call a stream, ran among the pebbles down below, and the sheep came cropping the grass up to the very door stane, when we sat supping our porridge in the mornings. It was a real neat cottage. Two rooms, one o' them the kitchen, and a door in the middle. I think I hear father's step as he went out to his work in the mornings, and mother going through the house as we put on our clothes.

"But the pleasant time was when father came home in the evenings, and supper was ready, and we sat



watching to see him coming over the fields, and ran to meet him. Sandy and little Jemmy would come toddling after me, but Robbie that was oldest met him first and got the spade to carry, and mother was at the door with the bairn in her arms, and the cheerful light shining out of the window. Oh! we didna mind how the wind blew, or the rain and snow fell when once he was in.

“But what was best of all, was when he came home on the Saturday night, for then the next day was the Sabbath, and he would rest from his work. He would sit with us round the fire and patch the shoes; and the mother would be mending the clean clothes, and laying them out for the morning, and then he would take down the Bible and read; perhaps he read on other evenings, but it was the Saturday's reading I liked best.

“Then on Sabbath morning, what a work there was washing and combing us all; and how grand we felt in our best clothes; and there was the father in his Sunday coat, and his waistcoat striped with blue and yellow; and the mother in her best cotton gown, and a red plaid that she put on over her white cap. Then we shut the door and followed father, he going first, and all of us following one by one after him through the corn-

fields, by the path that led to the kirk; the yellow corn on either hand—higher than my head—and father and Robbie going along the way before me.

“But there came a sad time soon. There was a talk of new ways going to begin, and all the cottages to be pulled down, and the small farms to be turned into a few large ones. Our cottage was to go with the rest. We had to cart away the beds and presses, and all we had, and follow the cart along the dusty road, and we went to live in a row of houses close to the farm yard, where all the other labourers lived too. They pulled down our cottage—so they told us, for I never went to see the place—and the plough went over the ground where it stood, and all the pleasant hill side.

“I think I have never had a light heart since that day we followed the cart along the dusty road. We were always sickly in our new house; it had but one room for us all, with a small press bed in it, and we four boys slept on the wooden top of it on a mattrass, with the ceiling close upon our faces. We missed the light that used to come in at the window in the morning, when we woke, and never ate our porridge as we used, sitting on the door stane. Our door opened into a yard, and was

wet and slushy often. Then the fever got among us; it began in a house near, where there were seven children, all in one room like us—with their father and mother—and swept away five of them; it came to us next. Little Jem was stricken first, and died; and they carried him away and buried him, and I can remember father's pale face, and mother sitting sobbing with the apron thrown over her head. It was a terrible time. I escaped some way, but all the others were taken; and I was left the only child in the house.

“Whether it was that father was broken down with grief, or that he had the fever too, he was laid up and could not go to work for a fortnight; so another man got his place, and we had to move again. We went into a large town, that was not very far off; we lived in a dreary, empty room, in a dark dirty court. Then it was I learned the pain of hunger and thirst. Father wandered about all day seeking work, and found none. No more pleasant Sabbaths for us; one day was like another; our clothes were in rags, and we should have been ashamed to be seen among other folk.

“At last mother and I got work in a factory; I believe it was through the master that father had served so long

in the farm speaking for us; and it was a proud day for me when I brought home my first week's wages. We got a better room, and there was bread in the house once more; but father could get nothing to do. There was no opening for him anywhere, and he looked like a broken man. He said he could not live on the labour of his wife and child, he that had brought up his family decent and respectable till they turned him out of his cottage, and sickness and death came upon him; and all that mother could beg or pray of him, he would go to sea. He had served his time in a merchantman when he was a boy.

“He went, and we worked on. We could maintain ourselves, and I liked the factory pretty well. It was not like the bad times, when little children were worked twelve and fourteen hours a day. Since the new law, we that were only nine years old, did not work more than eight and often six, and there was a good school we all went to. But the work was too hard for mother, and two years passed and then three years, and there was no news of father. So she took a bad cough, and grew weaker and weaker, and I lost her and was left alone.”

The poor boy could not speak for a good while, and

many a tear rolled down the weather beaten faces round him. The sun had gone down, and darkness had fallen over the sea when he began again.

“I cannot tell you about her death. She blessed me, and said many words to me, and many prayers for me. I think of every word and every look. They are in my heart but I cannot speak of them.

“I could not go back to work. I wandered down to the shipping with a longing to find father again; and I fancied the best way was to go to sea as he did; so I went a voyage to Newfoundland, and next year another to Canada. When I came home from that voyage the harbour master gave me a letter. It was from father. He had been home, and if I had remained ashore I should have been with him now perhaps.

“He told me in his letter that he had been left in the hospital at Quebec sick, when he made his first voyage, so that was the reason he never came home; and when he recovered, after a long illness, the only ship he could get was bound for Australia, so there he went; and he made up his mind when he got there to spend his wages in buying a little allotment of land, and then come back with his ship to take me and mother back; but all was

changed for him now she was gone. Still, he would go back and prepare a place for me, and I must come out to him, for his heart clung to his boy. I was to go to the master I had served, and he would help me to a ship, he said.

“So I went, and the master was very kind to me, and sent me to Liverpool with a letter to the owners of this ship, and told me how to hear of father when we land. I ought to be happy now, but I have seen so much sorrow I cannot hope much, and yet I do sometimes. Oh! I should be glad to see father's face again, and glad to stay with him and till the earth, and do the pleasant work I was born and bred to. I could fancy sometimes I see him as he used to sit on the ground in the corn field at harvest time, and mother carried me in her arms when she took him his dinner, and would seat me on the top of a stouk, which you call a sheaf, and I would sit with my hand full of bonny blue corn flowers and red poppies and stalks of corn, looking down at him as he ate it.”

Some of the passengers had gathered round as the boy ended, and a voice from among them cried in a tone that thrilled through all that heard it,

“What is your name? tell me your name?”

“My name is Adam Black,” he answered.

“My boy, my boy, come to me,” cried the same voice, and the crowd of passengers making way, a pale trembling man rushed forward towards him. It was indeed his father, who had been delayed longer than he expected at Liverpool, and so had chanced to take his passage in the same ship in which he was.

These two who had been a minute before so desolate were now happy and joyful together. The ship made a safe voyage, and they journeyed together to their little allotment of land in their new country, and worked together to bring it into cultivation. Adam loved to work for his father, and his father felt that every hour's toil he bestowed was preparing a resting place for his son. They never forgot the dear ones they had lost, nor the old home on the hill side, but they were grateful and peaceful in the new home they had found.

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## A WINTER'S TALE.

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WHEN the crimson curtains were drawn, and the lamp lighted, and the fire blazed, and the arm chair had been placed ready for the lady of the old manor house, to take her seat in her own warm corner of the great saloon; the children, who had been amusing themselves while she dined, would leave their books and playthings and watch the door, longing to see it open to admit her. They were her grandchildren who had come to keep Christmas in the country with her. There was to be a large party and all manner of gaiety soon, but now before the company arrived they had her all to themselves, and nearly every night she told them a story. Little Claude would sit on her lap, while Herbert and Julia stood one on each side;





WINTER. A WINTER'S TALE.



her lap-dog, with his long silky ears, lay asleep on a velvet chair near them ; round the walls were old pictures ; and at equal distances stood the armour of the knights of old times, the ancestors of the family, and the fire light glanced on their helmets and shields.

“Let it be a story of some old castle to-night,” said Herbert.

“I know a story about a ruined castle standing on the wild hills of Yorkshire that you would like I think,” said the lady.

“Had it a dungeon, and a keep, and battlements?” asked Julia.

“Yes, but happily all in ruins. It had once been the terror of the country far and near, when its proud lords inhabited it. Now people went to see it, and wonder at its thick walls and great size. A party went there one autumn day, and among them was Walter Tracy, the boy whose strange adventures on that occasion I am going to tell you.”

“While the elder members of the party rested on the sloping green bank that lay beneath the walls, the boys and girls began to play at hide and seek among the fragments of stone and tufted ivy in the courts. It came to Walter's

turn to hide. He was resolved to find a very secure place, so he ran along a vaulted gallery, went down a few broken steps, crossed another gallery and clambered over a fallen pillar into a large arched room, which he remembered having seen from a different side when they all went over the ruins. Very little light came into this place; just enough to enable him to grope along by the wall till he came to a sharp corner. He turned it and found himself quite in darkness. Here he stood still.

“But he had not stood still above half a minute when he felt the ground give way under his feet. He struggled, catching at wild bushes and stones, but in vain, he sunk fast; sand, dust, and showers of small stones falling with him. He clutched at these, trying to fix feet and hands in the sand, but down and down he went to a fearful depth. He lost his breath and almost lost his senses; but at length his feet rested on a firm projecting ledge, and he stopped, but heard the stones that had fallen with him still bounding downwards, till he lost the sound among the echoes of this frightful place.

“He had time now to think. What a dreadful situation he was in! He looked up, but there was nothing above him but utter darkness. He thought of his mother; he

called her; he felt as if he must die here, as if there was no hope nor help for him; he screamed aloud, but there were so many echoes round him from vaults and passages that he dared not scream again lest he should hear them. He believed he was in the depths of the dungeons under the castle, and in this idea he was right. He did not dare to move lest he should lose his footing and fall, and be dashed to pieces, nor dare to look down lest his head should grow dizzy; there he stood trembling with terror for a long time.

“But Walter was a brave boy, and, besides, he had a most affectionate heart. He forgot his own danger whenever he thought of his mother’s sorrow about him; and thoughts of her made him remember some words she had read to him that very morning to teach him that God is present everywhere. ‘If I go down into the grave Thou art there, Thy hand leadeth me, Thy right hand holdeth me; the darkness hideth not from Thee.’ He felt his courage revive, and resolved to make some effort for himself, if possible, and first to look down, if he could venture it, to see if any opening towards safety was there. If he had lost his presence of mind at this moment he must have fallen headlong, but he slowly and steadily

moved his head and looked down, and, strange to say, he saw, deep, deep below him, a bright light, like a star.

“He stood looking at this light. What could it be? Would it move up to him? Would it help him or only show him something dreadful? The thoughts he had in his mind when he looked down, made him believe it would help and save him. It did not move nor change. There it remained sending rays up into the darkness.

“He felt that he must try to get down to it. He moved one foot cautiously, but felt nothing as far as he could reach. He was certainly standing only on a stone or ledge, with nothing below it but a deep horrible pit. Again he stood staring at the star in terror, but again he felt more courage; stretched his foot straight down as far as he could, and felt another stone or ledge like that he was on. Very carefully he lowered himself to it. He rested a little while, then tried again, and found another stone to which he could trust; then another and another. He grew bolder, and began clambering downwards, sometimes slipping and almost losing his grasp, sometimes clinging with his hands, till he felt sure that the distance between him and the star became less.

“A slight sound now struck him. He listened. It was the sound of running water and came from below. Should he go on? Perhaps he should only fall headlong into some gulf or torrent. But then the star, what did that mean? Besides he could not stop where he was, and to get up was impossible. He must go on.

“Again he clambered downwards, and now he came so much nearer the light that he could distinguish points and blocks of stone or rock. He seemed to have reached the bottom at last. He groped on and his hand plunged into cold water. He found he was at the brink of a stream, of what depth or width he could not tell, and that the star was the reflection of a light that fell on the water from some crack or crevice near.

“He felt cautiously, with both hands extended, all along the rock on the side from which the light came, and at last found an opening through which he looked. At first he could distinguish nothing, for his eye, so long in darkness, was dazzled; but soon he saw a sight that filled him with horror. A dark wall was opposite to him, on which he saw the shadow of a tall man, nearly naked, sitting quite still, while too frightful looking animals gnawed at one of his hands.”

A scream from Julia interrupted the story. "The shadow! the shadow!" she cried.

All started, and looked round. "See," said her grandmother, "it is the shadow of your ugly little Jack-in-the-box, which is reflected by the fire-light on the wall behind us, that has frightened you. There he stands on the table."

"So he does!" said Julia. "Will you go on, pray grandmama."

"Walter could not take his eyes off this dreadful object, though it made him shudder and turn cold. 'This must be some poor prisoner kept in this horrible place,' thought he. 'I fancied that all such things were over; that men were no longer so cruel as to do such things. Are there dungeons still?' A slight movement of the shadow's head made him start and turn his eye in the opposite direction; and now he saw another sight. It was a little boy, not more than five years old, quite black, and nearly naked, sitting on a block of stone feeding two mice on some bread crumbs in his hand, with a short end of lighted candle stuck in a hole of the wall beside him.

"Walter stared again in astonishment and confusion. He looked once more at the shadow, then at the little boy,



then at the bright light on the water. He removed his eye from the opening; then returned and looked again. There was no longer any doubt about it. The terrible sight he first saw was nothing but the shadow of this little boy feeding his mice, rendered very large by the distance of the wall, and the star was the reflection of his candle falling through a round hole on a shallow stream of water that found its way out of the place where he sat, by some opening near his feet, and flowed out among the broken rocks.

“But who, then, was this poor child sitting alone in such a place?’ Scarcely had the thought arisen, when a rumbling noise like thunder was heard; the little black child jumped up, pulled a string and opened a low wooden door, and a strange procession came through it.

“A black figure, which Walter at first took for some animal, but which he soon saw to be a naked boy of about twelve years old, came first running on hands and feet.

“On his head was a lighted lamp, and a strong leather strap, bound across his forehead, fastened him to a low cart or waggon loaded heavily with dark blocks, behind which came two more boys in the same position who pushed it with their heads; the whole passed so rapidly

that Walter could scarcely see them, and the less as one of the two hindermost boys raised his head as the door shut behind them, and, with a coarse laugh, blew out the candle that was beside the little sitting figure. All was now totally dark; shadow, boy, and star were lost in inky, black night.

“But a voice of wail and lamentation rose through the darkness. ‘Oh! my light. All dark! Oh! my light,’ cried the little boy, and he sobbed and wailed piteously.

“Walter could not bear to hear him. He put his mouth to the hole and called out. ‘Poor little fellow, stop crying. Can I do anything to help you.’

“‘Bogies! bogies! witches and ghosts!’ screamed the child, and as the screams grew fainter in the distance Walter became aware that he had taken to flight in the same direction with the others.

“But Walter had discovered where he was. He knelt on the broken rocks beside the dark water and raised his voice in thanksgiving for his recovered hopes of life and safety. He was close to one of the narrow galleries of a coal mine. He knew well that all the country around was undermined by the collieries, but he had not thought of it in his fear and danger. He must have fallen down an

old shaft, as the openings are called that lead from the outer air to the underground workings. This shaft must have been cut from the dungeons of the castle and afterwards filled up, and forgotten.

“All Walter’s desire now was to make his way into the mine. He was aware his danger was not quite over for the miners were a rough set, and he hardly knew how they would use him, but he drove fear away and began to try to find some opening. He tried long in vain however. At last he thought of the stream of water. He waded into it; then lay flat down on his face in it; and by great efforts crept through the hole by which it ran out of the gallery. There at last he rested almost spent with fatigue.

“After some time he felt stronger. He drank a little water, which tasted fresh and sweet, and then set off in the direction he had seen the boys go, sure that that must lead him to some outlet of the mine. But he soon discovered the cause of these boys running, like animals, on all fours. The gallery, which chanced to be of tolerable height where he entered it, soon became so low that he could not stand upright in it, and was obliged to go down on his knees like them. He got on as fast as he could,

but he was not used to this position, and could not go half as fast as they had done with their load.

“Presently he heard sounds behind him; loud blows succeeded by harsh voices, and then the rumbling noise that had sounded like thunder in the hollow place he had come from. Another loaded car must have been dragged through the door with some difficulty, because of the absence of the poor child. It came rumbling on, faster and faster; it gained upon him. The low passage through which he crept was so narrow, that he felt the wall on each hand. He should be crushed under the heavy wheels!

“In a moment he took his resolution. He stopped; faced round; extended his arms, and as the lamp on the foremost boy's head came near, gave a loud shout. The whole set stopped at once, and one of those who pushed behind set up the same cry of ‘bogies! and witches,’ that the child had done, and rushed off into the darkness; but the others stood firm; staring and trembling however.

“‘I am a boy like yourselves,’ cried Walter, in a firm voice, ‘not a bogie. I am lost here. Help me out, and I'll give you all the money in my pocket; I have got five shillings I think.’

“After a little pause, the foremost boy spoke in a strange sort of language, that Walter could scarcely understand, but he thought it meant that they would take care he kept his promise, and that he might help them to ‘hurry the corve,’ to the shaft. By the way the boy pointed, as much as by his words, Walter found out that ‘hurrying the corve,’ meant drawing the waggon, and that he was to push behind with his head, in place of the boy who had run away. He therefore took his place and began his new work.

“It was no easy one. They went at such a rate, that he was often on the point of sinking down exhausted. But his companions were not the sort of people to be trifled with, and he hoped he was getting nearer and nearer to the end of his troubles; so he bore it with all the strength he could master, and went on. The way seemed endless. They took sharp turns; they went through rough places and wet places, and lower places still; at last they stopped, and Walter lay panting on the ground.

“They were in a large lofty place, where an immense fire burned, and many people were moving about, and heaps of coals were piled; and where, better than all, far over head, a round spot—so small from its distance, it

could scarcely be seen—showed daylight and the sky. Oh! how thankful Walter was, as he lay and looked up at it.

“He had to take out his money without delay to give to the boys, but that he did willingly; then several people gathered about him, and more and more as evening drew on and they stopped work. Walter afterwards said, that he often felt afraid of their looks and movements, but he did his best to hide his fear from them, and spoke out boldly and told his story simply, and then he said how much he longed to go home to comfort his mother. They seemed to understand that, and to feel more kindly to him afterwards. They gave him something to eat and drink, which he much wanted—for he was faint with hunger—and told him he should go up the shaft with the first set that went.

“It was six o'clock in the evening, when at last that welcome time came. Walter took his place with four men in a kind of basket, hung in chains, and at a signal they were wound up to the surface of the earth. How joyfully did Walter set his foot on it once more!

“It was a wild stormy evening, and the sun had set. Walter looked about him, and saw the old castle standing

out black against the sky, a mile distant; so far had he travelled through the windings of the mine. He had to pass it, and to go a mile farther to reach his home, but nothing seemed to tire him now. He walked stoutly on, with joy in his heart, and without a thought of the strange figure he made. He was nearly as black as the colliers themselves; his clothes were torn in many places, he had lost his hat, and his hair was blown about by the wind.

“But as he drew nearer his home, it happened to him as it often does to us all, that he grew anxious and fearful. He wondered how his mother had borne this long day of suffering; perhaps he should find her very ill. By this time he had reached the ruins; he looked towards them with a sort of anger, as the beginning of his misfortunes, and noticed with surprise that a light shone out of one of the low arched openings. He stopped—not able to account for it, in an uninhabited place like that—when something within him made him feel how very likely it was, that his mother might be there still, searching for him, and not able to bear to leave the spot. With this thought, he left the high road, and climbed up the grassy bank towards it, and having reached the walls, walked round to the broken window, from which the light came.

He looked in, and there indeed he saw his mother. She was alone; a lantern on the ground lighted the ruinous chamber she was in, and up and down she paced with hurried steps. Walter almost feared to speak to her, she looked so wild, and while he stopped, irresolute, he heard her say, 'will they never come!'

"He could not bear it any longer. 'Mother, mother, I am safe, I am here!' he cried.

"You may think, my children, what a meeting it was. Mrs. Tracy had, only half an hour before, found the place where he had sunk; she had sent for ropes to have it searched, and was waiting for the people to come back, when his own voice sounded in her ears, and she felt his arms clasping her tight.

"When Walter felt the blessing of being once more in his own happy home, his thoughts often wandered to the mine and all he had seen there. He thought of the rough men, but they seemed to be pretty well contented; but the hard work of the hurriers running through those passages pained him to remember, and above all he recollected the poor child, the little trapper as he learned to call him, sitting lonely and full of fears in the dark. He could not forget that it was the light of his little candle



that had cheered him like a star, and most likely saved his life. With his mother's permission, therefore, he went back to the mine and bargained with the foreman, or overlooker, as he was called, to be allowed to take away that little boy. He was an orphan and had been apprenticed to the colliery by the parish. Walter took him home, and his mother clothed him, and he taught him, and they took care of him till he was old enough to learn a good trade.

“But though it was a great pleasure to Walter to have made this little boy so much happier, he could not forget how many more there were in quite as miserable a state, and when he grew to be a man, and heard that some good people were trying to improve the condition of these children, he joined them, and worked with all his heart to help them.”

Herbert asked if they did much good for the poor fellows.

“They did much,” replied the lady. “No such little children are now allowed to go down into the collieries. But much remains to be done.”

“Walter was a brave and good boy to do what he could,” said Herbert.

“Yes,” she replied, “follow his example, and, like him, remember the unfortunate when you are happy. While you are young, and when you grow old, always ‘do what you can.’ Good hearts and willing hands can change sorrows into pleasures in many a home.”

THE END.

*By the same Author.*

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